

As a 36 year resident of West Friendship, I appreciate the opportunity to address the Council on the Country's proposed 2024 Budget and CIP Amendments, specifically the \$282.7 million suggested for the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, an increase of 2.9% over their last budget.

Parks is to be commended for its successful collaborative efforts in the creation of community gardens (e.g. (multiyear waiting lists, community requests for gardens, etc). The Council should increase funding for community garden construction in this and future Capital budgets. Community gardens with local collaborations have enhanced neighborhood involvement, expanded outdoor activities while offering participants nutritional, health and social benefits, and increased environmental awareness. The construction of more raised beds and ADA compliant access would enable more residents, particularly seniors and those with disabilities, to experience the pleasure of gardening.

Our parks are important part to the County's attraction. Rising construction costs and new projects like the Women's Farm Market support the NPPC budget request. But to maintain continued support of residents, Parks must be more transparent, equitable, and willing to identify funding sources, project costs, and cost benefit calculations, and closely adhere to its own published project standards. My community last year was told Park funds (estimated at \$1.2 million) could only be used at Willard Ave Park for dog parks, despite the budget's multiple use descriptions in "Urban Park Elements, Minor New Construction Local parks, Park Refreshers", etc. The proposed plan did not adhere to Parks dog park standards - 200 ft distance from residences, not did it provide significant noise abatement for residents, etc. and required demolition of the turn of the century Reynolds House found to be of architectural and historic interest. The project is still under review.

All project planning should begin with local community consultations seeking input and exchange of ideas, particularly with nearby residents. Heightened transparency is crucial when an intense land use such as a skateboard facility or a dog park is proposed since county park land is exempt from zoning standards that such commercial usage would require to protect residents. Park projects

seem exempt from county noise restrictions and often little concern for their adverse impacts on long time resident's ability to enjoy their property and in our case, maintain their local park as green wooded stream haven.

Finally, given the substantial planned increase in redevelopment of housing in the Friendship Heights area of DC and Maryland, there is an unusual opportunity for both governments to try to work together to ensure that there is sufficient areas set aside for parks and recreation for these new families, their children, and the needs of their pets by the buildings' developers and local government. This could be an exciting intergovernmental collaboration that could enhance the desirability of both communities and reduce possible community frictions due to insufficient available facilities.

Thank you for your consideration.

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